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Screening Motion Voted

State Department Book Plan Stirs Federation Argument

By Dorothea Pattee

A PORTABLE LIBRARY of "pocket-books," being sent to India by the Department of State, provoked a heated argument at a meeting of the General Federation of Women's Clubs yesterday, and resulted in a motion to "screen all books sent out by the federation or used in a project endorsed by the federation."

Center of the argument was a library of some 50 books—ranging from "Moby Dick" and Shakespeare to Pulitzer Prize-winning "This is Russia" by Edmund Stevens (with foreword by CIA director Gen. Walter Bedell Smith) which is being shipped by the State Department to India. Through a misunderstanding, however, GFWC members were led to believe the library was a project of the United States National Commission for UNESCO, with which the GFWC is affiliated.

Antagonists in the dispute were Mrs. John L. Whitehurst, of Baltimore, Md., Americanism chairman of the GFWC, and Mrs. William Dick Sporberg, of New York, member of the United States commission for UNESCO.

THE CONTROVERSY started when Mrs. Sporberg displayed the portable library at the meeting, explaining that great numbers of these libraries were being sent to India—"the most imminently critical country in the world."

Members received the impression that shipment of the libraries was a UNESCO project approved by the GFWC. (The GFWC is one of 60 organizations represented on the UNESCO commission. Actually, the library

was exhibited at a UNESCO commission meeting held here October 4 by Dr. Wilson Compton, administrator of the State Department's International Information Administration. Dr. Compton showed the UNESCO committee the library as an example of the work of the international information administration. After Mrs. Sporberg displayed the books, Mrs. Whitehurst rose to declare, "I object. Those books should be screened by the federation before they are sent out. They may be all right, but they may be loaded with dynamite." She went on to add that "UNESCO is on a spot from one part of the country to another. I'm opposed to any book going out anywhere under the name of the federation while propagandists are at work on this."

"All we need is to find one subversive book the federation is condoning, and we might as well stop the entire Americanism program," she added.

At this point Mrs. Samuel Levy of Natchitoches, La., introduced a motion to "appoint a committee of five to screen all books sent out by the Federation or used in a project endorsed by the Federation." The move was passed without discussion by the group. Mrs. Oscar A. Ahlgren, GFWC president, will appoint the committee members.

FOR THE PAST five months the GFWC has been carrying on an extensive "Americanisms" campaign, led by Mrs. Whitehurst, and aimed at restoring the American heritage, spreading the ideals of religion and democracy, combating Communist influences in our country. Among 17

pamphlets issued by the Americanism department is one titled "Communism and Education," which reports the House Un-American Activities statement that there are "many" Communist fronts and fellow travellers in the United States school system, that Communists are active in teachers union and student activities, and that textbooks "play up the defects of the United States and play down its successes," while doing the opposite for the Soviet Union.

The pamphlet ends by telling the clubwomen how to combat these Communist influences: "Know the facts, work in your community to get rid of Communists . . . and be prepared to face accusations of 'witch hunting,' 'red-baiting,' 'textbook burning' and strangling of 'academic freedom.'"

The GFWC meeting adjourns tomorrow afternoon and afternoon sessions.